

Modern Knowledge And Approach of Yoga Enhances Performance in Health, Fitness and Sports



Physical Education

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ABSTRACT

Present day Health and fitness are the concern of each and every person. The scope of application of yogic practices for health and fitness has been increasing day by day. Also, the therapeutic aspect of yoga has become very popular as an alternative method of treatment in various diseases of modern times. Yoga has been found very much useful for psychosomatic disorders in the present times. Not only that, yogic exercises can be used as physiological and psychological procedures for physical fitness to prevent various injuries in some Sport activities and help in the rehabilitation of the injured and ill persons if learnt under the proper guidance and practiced judiciously. Yogic practices are also very useful to get perfect health and fitness and thereby improving the performance in various Sport activities. Finally, the goal of yoga and human life is self-realization.

DEFINITION OF YOGA –

In 'Bhagawadgita' Krishna gives the following definition of Yoga.

O Arjuna; be steadfast in Yoga; perform your duty and abandon all attachment to success or failure, such evenness is call Yoga.

YOGA FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS MANAGEMENT:

According to some people health means a sound mind in a sound body. A sound mind or a sound body develops only in a sound environment. Thus by 'health we may mean' a sound mind in a sound body in a sound environment." The traditional views on health are a condition of the body free from physical disease.

YOGA AND SPORTS –

Every sport involves vigorous movements, vigorous movements shorten muscles and make them more susceptible to pulls and stains. It is to be noted that more a person involves himself in intensive and vigorous activities, the more he needs to stretch. In sports like running, the muscles most commonly injured by pulls and strains are the hamstring and the calf muscles. Athletes competing in running sports should regularly practice stretching, stretching is the most important injury preventing in sports Asanas are safety zone for this type of Sports injury

CONCLUSION:

Even though Yoga technique has so many advantages over modern methods of physical culture yet it may be pointed out that it cannot be universally practiced. The present day society is very complex and we cannot recommend Yogic-technique to busy men to attain perfection. Everyone should not be presumed to be eager or serious about the ultimate goal of life, e.g. a soldier cannot be taught to be a yogi. In defense we may ask, "why should everyone be compelled to be a pseudo-soldier"? The need of body, mind and soul differ from individual to individual, and any method of mass-equalization will only bring disruption in the personality of an individual.

But the knowledge and approach of Yoga gives necessary background to pursue one's quest in whatever direction chosen with the maximum benefit. Yoga is not just some physical exercises. It is a whole attitude towards life and followed assiduously by practitioners of yoga. Hence, proper knowledge and approach of Yoga definitely enhances performance in the field of Health, Fitness and Sports.

Present day Health and fitness are the concern of each and every person. The scope of application of yogic practices for health and fitness has been increasing day by day. Also, the therapeutic aspect of yoga has become very popular as an alternative method of treatment in various diseases of modern times. Yoga has been found very much useful for psychosomatic disorders in the present times. Not only that, yogic exercises can be used as physiological and psychological procedures for physical fitness to prevent various injuries in some activities and help in the rehabilitation of the injured and ill persons if learnt under the proper guidance and practiced judiciously. Yogic practices are also very useful to get perfect health and fitness and thereby improving the performance in various daily activities. Finally, the goal of yoga and human life is self-realization.

In the present age we are going through very rapid change owing to the scientific advancement. Due to this scientific advancement not to speak of a country but every person has acquired the sense of competitiveness, so that he may not lag behind from anybody. This tendency is hovering over every walk of life including sports. Hence man is exposed to the stresses and strains of life almost every minute with which he is not able to adjust. He needs some way through which he can lessen the burden of stresses. This can happen only when he is able to adapt himself to the situation. Usually the reactions to the stresses are far out of proportion the demands made by the circumstances and they lead to 'adaptation diseases' as Hans Selye calls them. The immediate need for modern man is to develop psychophysiological resistance to enable him to meet successfully with the circumstances and not to have the reactions on the part of the body and mind out of proportion.

To the problems of modern man, yoga has as answer for one who sincerely wants to seek it. We emphasize the word sincerely because no attempts could be pursued without sincerity.

Without sincerity one cannot concentrate for a longer time on an activity. Yoga is a panacea for concentration. So it is essential to know what yoga is and how the health techniques of yoga affect the physical and physiological fitness of body.

The word 'Yoga' occurs in Rigveda in the various senses, such as yoking or harnessing or achieving the unachieved. In Yajurveda the word 'Yoga' is used in the sense of union and Yoga practice. In Kathopanisad it is said that when five senses are united in the endeavor this is called 'Paramgati'. Such state is called Yoga. 'Yoga' word is also found in Taittiriya Upanishad in the sense of solution.

Apart from these meanings, the word 'Yoga' is used in mathematics in the sense of addition whereas in astrology the word 'Yoga' means coming together of planets. In ayurveda it is used in the sense of compound of different herbs in particular medicine.

The historical origin of yoga in India belongs to the distant past. When and how it began, cannot be established what is perhaps possible is to try to trace historical sources of information about the occurrence of Yoga and Yoga practices in the past in India are traced in Vedas.

Apart from these literary evidences, the archaeological evidences also help to reconstruct the theory that India was the original home of yoga.

Ancient Indian education was depending upon highest knowledge attained by 'Tapas' and revealed in Veda. To sum up: the system of education adumbrated in the Rigveda thus concerns only the acquisition of the highest knowledge and saving wisdom and not of ordinary secular knowledge or intermediate truths for purposes of worldly life. The method of this learning

is determined by its aims and contents. The method of attaining the knowledge of the Absolute, "Parabrahma-Jnana" is not the method of acquiring knowledge of the objective sciences, arts, and crafts. It is the method of realization of the highest and ultimate truths.

The entire Hindu view of life is characterized by its instinctive 'choice of realities' of a particular order; the ideal and the spiritual as distinguished from the physical and temporal. The end can only be achieved through a course of training that reshapes the psychic and bodily life of man.

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In another place in '**Bhagawadgita**' Krishna gives a different definition.

He says a man engaged in devotional service rides himself of good and bad actions even in his life. Therefore strive for Yoga, which is art of all work.

Patanjali the author of the Yoga Sutras in his '**Yoga Darsana**' gives the definition of Yoga as '**Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodhah**' (Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of mind-staff). The Nirodhah has been invariably translated as control of mind.

According '**Braham Kumari**' "**Yoga means establishing the mind in the consciousness of God, or having mental link with God**".

The most precise and correct meaning of Yoga is "the state of perfection which is attained through the mind" says **Shyam Swami**.

Apart from these definitions certain modern writers give the following definitions:

Yoga is a form of intuitive awareness by which an individual becomes conscious of his real self and ultimate goal. It unites the real self with the universal consciousness. It assists an individual realizing the state of pure consciousness which is germane in his personality. It is not an external adventure like the pure and applied sciences. It is, in fact, a form of internal adventure which ultimately leads to the discovery of the real self. This inward journey is possible when an individual is able to make his mind perfectly calm and free from all its impurities.

IMPORTANCE OF YOGA -

Patanjali Yoga Sutra 1.30

Patanjali explains what are the obstacles in life?

(1)Disease, (2) dullness, (3) doubt, (4) carelessness (5) laziness, (6) inability to turn the attention away from the obstacles, (7) prevented or distorted vision, (8) inability to find a firm ground for the spiritual investigation and (9) even when such ground is found, unsteadiness of mind and attention in the pursuit of the enquiry - these are the obstacles and distractions for they bring about and constitute the apparent fragmentation of the mind -staff.

Modern age is the machine age as such it is power ridden, discovery of new ways of generating power, exploiting fresh aspects of known force, inventing machines to make machine is the present craze under man's control but man himself does not have his sense and mind under his control. This has resulted in the misuse and abuse of the fruits of civilization and science, because all power corrupts. The adoption of Yogic way of life is the real form and the guarantee against such abuse of power. Yoga brings to man several supernatural powers that no machine can ever generate. Just as there cannot be any spiritual discipline without mental discipline, so there cannot be any mental dis-

cipline without bodily discipline the body is the temple of God. Therefore it must be kept clean and healthy.

Thus a healthy body, healthy mind and spiritualism of the highest kind which find its expression in working for the good of the humanity and removing the suffering of mankind from the contents of Yogic discipline. Any person of any cast and creed may follow Yogic discipline. Yoga is therefore, a secular discipline. Its approach is scientific and humanistic.

In the present study Yoga is mainly associated with the motor fitness. The need of Yoga in present time is to build a healthy and mentally alert citizen, a strong nation by developing general fitness of citizens with the help of Yoga activities like asana and pranayam.

Yoga postures or asanas are one of the most important systems of physical culture ever invented. They reflect an amazing understanding of how the body works and particularly, how to release tension at a deep level from the tissue organs and joints. Asanas keep the body and mind in the best possible health. They provide specific positions and movements designed to strengthen and stretch the muscular system to effectively move the body away from small pains and illnesses back perfect and normal balance. They keep the spinal column subtle in order to create the optimal flow of energy through the nerves that enervate the organ and glandular systems. And, perhaps most importantly, they begin a systematic cleansing of the tissues preparing the body for more advanced yogic practice.

Asana are a part of sacred science that comprehends all aspects of consciousness. They reflect not only a profound knowledge of the body but also of prana, mind and spirit, of which the body is only an external image of manifestation.

YOGA FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS MANAGEMENT:

According to some people health means a sound mind in a sound body. A sound mind or a sound body develops only in a sound environment. Thus by 'health we may mean' a sound mind in a sound body in a sound environment." The traditional views on health are a condition of the body free from physical disease.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) redefined health as "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Health may be considered in its primitive aspect, curative aspect and preventive aspect. It would be interesting to note the contribution of yoga in developing these aspects of health and fitness on the basis of scientific observations. Although limited research has been done in the primitive aspects, the available evidence indicates promotion of factors of physical fitness and emotional stability through yoga.

Yoga practices have been found best to contribute to flexibility according to de Vries (1967), Smithells and Camerson (1962), Dhanraj (1974), and Gharote (1973). Other factors of physical fitness are equally favorably influenced as seen from the studies of Gharote (1973, 1976). Minimum muscular fitness adjudged by Kraus Weber tests in the school children was seen improved by yogic training according to the studies of Gharote (1976) and Moorthy (1982). Cardiovascular efficiency has been found to improve as a result of short term and long term yogic training Programme among the physically conditioned and unconditioned males (Gharote and Gauguly 1979, Gauguly and Ghaote 1974). Residual and delayed effect on the improvement of physical fitness was observed by Gharote (1976). Emotional stability which governs mental health is an important aspect of personality. Various studies reported by Kocher and Pratap (1971, and 1972), Kocher (1972), Palsane and Kocher (1973) showed favorable results of short term yogic training on mental health through the influence of autonomic nervous system and endocrine system. The study of Gharote (1971) on school children evaluating the psycho-physiological effects of short term yogic training on the working of autonomic nervous system using a sophisticated and elaborate battery of Wenger's Autonomic Balance, brought

evidence about the utility of yogic practices towards improved emotional stability. Recent experiences of introduction yogic practices in management programmes shows that it may serve as a good relief in reducing organizational stress and in promoting a congenial work climate. The practice of yoga nidra, certain selected asanas, pranayamas and meditation are useful to relax and quieten the mind (Bhole, 1981; Datey, 1978; Singh, 1978). They can be conveniently introduced in an organizational set up to promote alertness, congenial feelings job satisfaction and work proficiency.

On the basis of some of the scientific investigations with yogic training programme mentioned above, it would be clear that yogic practices can play an important role in promoting health and fitness. On the other hand health and fitness are very much essential as primitive approaches to yoga.

The areas of fitness can be broadly classified in to two factors-

- (1) Health related fitness.
- (2) Performance related fitness.

HEALTH RELATED FITNESS

The dynamic development of modern science and technology and the achievements of contemporary civilization have brought about social and economical transformations so rapidly and to such a scale that there is every danger to the ecological balance of man bringing about an unprecedented increase in his health problems including low resistance of stress and disease, birth of a large number of psychosomatic diseases etc. The situation has made very much imperative for the physical educationists to find out suitable programmes of physical activities for our health problems to keep up with events as rapidly as the world in which we operate and to counteract the influences impinged upon by the environmental conditions in view of proper protection (Preventive aspect), maintenance and promotion of general health, quality of living and productivity.

FITNESS FOR INCREASING PERFORMANCE

The recent trend to prove the physical-superiority of the nation and to show its worth in the international field of games and sport and hence establish its supremacy has thrown a challenge to the physical educationists, the coaches their co-workers in ancillary disciplines to find out such phenomenal and procedural aids that might prove to be helpful in excelling in competitive sports.

Therefore, the rising enthusiasm for sports and physical activity, may it be meant for health and physical fitness for effective living or an effort in the direction of achieving top level performance in a competitive sport, must lead constantly to expand interest of all concerned in the scientific research related to bio-physiological changes from various forms of physical activities or practices including yoga. There are number of references available in ancient yoga texts regarding the beneficial effects of yogic practices that occur from the regular practice of yogic techniques. Among these traditional claims-some are ordinary, while a few seem to be extraordinary or exceptional. Then, there are present day scientists of 20th century who have unveiled a number of physical mental, emotional, physio-chemical and neurological factors that are beneficially influenced by yoga practices. The results of such scientific studies can be taken to be advantageous to almost all spheres of life. However the scope is not limited there to the application of yogic practices in the fields of education and physical education only.

YOGA FOR HANDICAPPED

According to yoga education "Each soul is potentially divine" i.e. everyone is born with unlimited capacity (potentiality). To be healthy and fit has been recognized as one of the fundamental rights of everyone; even handicapped are no exceptions to it. The blind, the deaf and/or physically disabled or deformed either because of accident, disease or infirmity aspire an independent and normal life along with their abilities and disabilities. And for that purpose, health and fitness are the basic requisites but is not possible for them to participate in strenu-

ous physical activities including active sports along with their peers. No doubt, even at Olympiad level sports for handicapped are held but these are not yet within the reach of each and every one. In such situations, yoga can be of great asset for all of them. They can learn yogasanas; pranayams, mudra bandhaas and meditation under the guidance of specially trained teacher.

YOGA FOR PRISONERS

Yoga has proved to a very effective and useful medicine for changing the personality of criminal's. In criminal's personality, in his feelings, thoughts and actions, we can see abnormalities. These internal abnormalities completely influence his life and induce him to commit crimes. Crime is a trait or tendency; tendency means a wave arising in the mind. If these tendencies are calmed down, the personality regains serenity, when the personality attains peace, the mental stress, emotional stress, agitated thoughts etc. also clam down and the suffering and sorrows end. To reform the personality and to change the criminal tendencies, the best solution is to practice yoga. The prisons should become the centers of personality reforms rather than continue as centers of punishment not only in India but throughout the world. In the western countries, attempts are being made to reform prisons. Research is being carried out on yoga and behavioral changes and yoga and personality development. The principal function of yoga centers is to give yoga training to the prisoners of maximum security cells. Even the prisoners are prepared as yoga teachers and are sent to other centers to teach. In India, such schemes are being implemented and have been found very useful. In various states yoga is being taught in the prisons. Mrs. Kiran Bedi, had taken many steps to implement yoga when Tehar Central Prison was under her control.

Vyavahare (1993) conducted research, launched at the Thane Prison. It aimed at totally changing the personality of the inmates by removing inner imbalances and outer tensions through yoga. According to him, it is unfortunate that though jail reforms world over aimed at doing things that would keep alive optimism in the minds of prisoners, worthwhile efforts are still to be made in that direction. In spite of reforms, sadly enough, the attitude of the society toward the outlaws and vice versa remains unchanged. The feeling that once a criminal always a criminal is wrong, yoga can unfold for them as well as the society a new atmosphere conducive to absorption of the criminal as active and useful members of the society. His study conducted at Thane showed that yogic practices positively influenced the physical fitness, interpersonal relationship and psycho-social attitudes, feeling of tranquility and reduced anger.

YOGA FOR ASTRONAUTS AND ARMY PERSONNEL

Armed personnel and astronauts need everything that yoga has to offer because yoga has been designed to clear the blockages of these different aspects of the personality, these problems deep down in our consciousness which are stopping us from realizing the qualities of security, of joy and humor, of power and courage, of love and compassion for one's fellow human beings, of communication, and of clear thinking and a realization of what is real. Yoga does all this by moving different areas of the body through therefore, the physical practices or asanas activate the channels between the discs of the chakras and different centers of the nervous system, associated with these aspects of the personality, in a physical way. The emotional aspects, especially centers around the limbic system and hypothalamus in the brain, are also directly activated. In pranayama a similar process occurs on the level of pranic energy. The practice of mudras and bandhas redirects this prana throughout the body. In the beginning, the practice of meditation is simply a process of internalize the awareness. Pratyahara, the ability to go within and eliminate outside stimuli is important for military of armed personnel and astronaut in a number of ways. For instance, when a military unit is undergoing continual bombardment and stress from outside, there are periods when these soldiers need to get as much rest as they can. The yoga practices are way of introverting the external stimuli.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

The first step towards the management of stress is to moderate the perception of the level of stress by the entire level of brain, the cerebrum, the cortex, the association memory. Thus, major component of the learning experience can be regulated to a large extent. Once we have rated a stress at a particular level, our reactions then dependent of the quality or our perception. As these behavioral reactions are both physical and psychological they are amenable to moderation by yogic practices as they become a part of discipline and a way of life. Reaction to stress are moderated because of the capacity of yogic practices to harmonize the sympathetic and para sympathetic activity, to regulate the heart rate, blood pressure, sugar levels etc, and whole physical infrastructure, becomes a more efficient and stronger medium for performance at level one and two.

The third level of stress management in yoga is stress release. After a day's work one goes to one's house, he can practice savasana and Yoga-Nidra to release stress. So yoga helps with the management of experiential stress on all the three levels of perception.

YOGA AND SPORTS -

Utility of Yoga for the promotion of sports may be useful from the following points of view:

- (a) Every sport involves vigorous movements, vigorous movements shorten muscles and make them more susceptible to pulls and stains. It is to be noted that more a person involves himself in intensive and vigorous activities, the more he needs to stretch. In sports like running, the muscles most commonly injured by pulls and strains are the hamstring and the calf muscles. Athletes competing in running sports should regularly practice stretching, stretching is the most important injury preventing in sports Asanas are safety zone for this type of injury.
- (b) It is accepted by the trainer that warming up is necessary not only to avoid injuries but also to improve the performance in sports. The key to good warming up is to increase the pace of the work out gradually so that the muscles can adjust to the increased pace and remain free from injury. The steady stretching in asanas prepares such a background.
- (c) Application of Yogic exercises have a considerable scope in the promotion of sports. Promotion of sports depends on basic motor fitness factors, specific sports skills and psychological factors.
- (d) Physical fitness is must for any good performance in sports. Maintenance of physical fitness during participation period and in off-season is necessary for every sportsman. This can be achieved excellently by imbibing the Yogic routine. Yogic exercises deal with the vital organs of the body on which health depends.
- (e) Yogic therapy helps healing physical sufferings and mental maladies, tensions, strain and stresses of the fast modern life of industrial civilization and culture leading towards moral crisis and mental anxieties, confusions and mental conflicts. Yoga has a solution for all these ailments and can relieve one from mental tensions and emotional imbalances. Yoga can also soothe the agitated and excited mind and restore it to tranquility, calm and peace. Where asanas, pranayamas and kriyas are effective for curing all health, the skeletal defects and derangements like lordosis, packing head, hunch back pigeon chest, knock knees, flat foot. etc, which are so common in the students.

To the commoners Yoga at the external level appear as a system of Gymnastics. But it is not so. Its posture is beneficial for nerves, mind as well as glands. Medicines are mostly prescribed to help the circulation, digestion, and for the stimulation of glandular secretion, but these do not achieve these effects to the extent in which circulation of digestion and elimination are improved and granular secretion are balanced through Yoga postures.

- (f) Yoga is a way of life. By practicing asanas we get health and strength of body. It is purity of thought which leads sports persons to do the right things in the right way all the time.
- (g) The Yogic discipline consists in moving forward slowly but steadily towards the goal of moral and spiritual perfection. Yogic discipline should be identified only with certain forms of bodily exercises. Nor it is identical with the power of breath control. The body is the temple of God; therefore, it must be kept clean and healthy. The training of body facilitates the training of mind.

YOGA AS A PROFESSION

It is a sad fact that experts in the yoga practices who can give the right kind of advice are actually very rare. Most of the persons who take to yoga as a profession do not usually have a scientific attitude, and thus what they seem to propagate is their personal likes and dislikes and idiosyncrasies. As element of mystery is found to the rampant in their activities and sincere, honest people are often cheated and deceived by the so called masters in yoga. It is a happy sign, however, that some intelligent and good natured people are also now getting attracted towards the art and science of yoga.

A number of teachers training courses are run by Govt. Semi-Govt, private recognized Institutions and Universities in India and abroad. After passing out many of them take up yoga as a profession of teaching at the school, college and university level. Some yoga teachers are running their won centers for treatment of psycho-somatic disorders through yoga.

Well renowned yoga institutions provide various yoga training, teaching program to prepare teachers, coaches. After passing out these program from these institutions, most of them adopt yoga as a profession. They are trying to implement modern approach to yoga and fitness in every sphere of life.

CONCLUSION:

Even though Yoga technique has so many advantages over modern methods of physical culture yet it may be pointed out that it cannot be universally practiced. The present day society is very complex and we cannot recommend Yogic-technique to busy men to attain perfection. Everyone should not be presumed to be eager or serious about the ultimate goal of life, e.g. a soldier cannot be taught to be a yogi. In defense we may ask, "why should everyone be compelled to be a pseudo-soldier"? The need of body, mind and soul differ from individual to individual, and any method of mass-equalization will only bring disruption in the personality of an individual.

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